

IDSA WORLD TEN DANCE CHAMPIONSHIPS
(UKRAINE, KYIV : 25 – 27 AUGUST 2006)

By Andre and Beata Cloete



Andre and I were thrilled by the thought of having to compete in our first ***World Adult Ten dance championship*** competition. We have competed in the Open British as Juniors, Youth and Adults and also represented South Africa at the IDSF World Youth Latin and the IDSF World Youth Ballroom. At the same time Andre was not looking forward to the long flight from Cape Town to the Ukraine. We departed from Cape Town International at 19h00 and arrived at Heathrow airport at 06h00 the next morning. This was not exactly the most pleasant place to be, as the airport security kept asking us questions such as: "Why are you leaving the airport now".

This was rather funny as I thought the answer was quite obvious. Turns out it wasn't so obvious after all with the international security problems. On our flight to Ukraine, we had the opportunity to converse with two well-known international adjudicators, Stephen Hannah and Frank Venables but unfortunately they were not there to adjudicate our World championship, but the WDC World Professional Ten dance Championships. On arrival at Ukraine airport, we were received with a warm welcome by the Ukrainian dance community. We were not able to do a formal tour of the city, but from what I (Andre) could gather on our trip to the hotel, is that this city was very beautiful and was referred to as the greenest city in Europe. When arriving at the hotel, Andre noticed that it was classy and that it was in walking distance from the competition – rather steep walk.

We unpacked and started to prepare for our first competition that was to take place on the Saturday, 26th August in the afternoon. This was an open section, as our World Adult Ten Dance Championships were only to be held on the Sunday afternoon. Initially Andre was not keen on dancing the Saturday. Our aunt, Marion Baxter, who is a Professional and has attended a World Professional Ten Dance Championship before, explained to him that it would be a good idea to dance. Not only to feel the environment and the floor, but also to see how we matched up against the others, and therefore would know how much too push ourselves in the World championships.

The Saturday morning, after we had breakfast, Andre went to register for the Open Adult Ballroom section, while I prepared for the competition. The Adult Open Ballroom section consisted of a Quarter-Final that was split into two heats. While and after we danced Andre could feel that this was not our best performance. Nonetheless we made it to the Semi-final and still the dancing did not feel good. We did not make it to the Final and ended up in **ninth** place. At first we thought that was good enough, so we just sat back and looked at the rest of the competition. As I was observing the various sections, I thought to myself, "yes, this is Ballroom of a high standard, but we are just as good, otherwise we would not be here", and therefore the three of us, myself, Beata and our aunt started strategizing. We then retired for the evening.

Sunday came and it was time for the competition. I knew that we would only have one chance to make a good first impression. To let people know we are there and that we too have something to offer in the World of dance. The afternoon session consisted of the rounds and the evening session of the Semi-Final and Final. To Andre, this event did not feel like a World Championship. When we marched onto the floor, which Andre was not keen on doing initially, we did not do it in a formal way with flags and announcements. When you are a guest in a foreign country, you should respect their way of doing things. As the first round of Ballroom commenced, our dancing continued to feel terrible. I thought that this was not to be our day, as my (Andre's) collar was shooting loose in between the rounds and also Beata's wing of her dress came apart. Once again, ever so calmly my aunt managed to calm us down and we got changed for Latin. The round of Latin went much better as things started to fall into place. We immediately stood out, not just because of our style of dancing but also because we were the only "Coloured" couple there. We instantly caught the crowd's attention as we could hear them cheering for us. This boosted our confidence level, because here we are, all the way from South Africa and people from another country appreciated our dancing. We made it to the Quarterfinals and we started with Latin this time. Our aunt had told us: that this was a big positive for us, as many of the couples were better in one style, which was the Ballroom. So yet again we had to give our all, and I could feel how our dancing improved from round to round. Everything was more settled and we felt like dancing at home. One thing that really amazed me was their punctuality. They run strictly on time and according to the programme. We did not have much time in between the rounds, so things were kind of rushed.



The results came out and we had made it to the Semi-final. We were happy to have made it thus far, so we decided to just enjoy our dancing. The Semi-final was starting in the evening at 19h00.

Before taking the floor, I whispered to my sister to just have fun and enjoy it, and if we should get tired, just to think of our dear friend who had passed away, **Itumuleng Lebeko**. To think how he would push himself in each dance and persevere. We did not understand much of the language that was spoken, but when they said from Africa, Andre and Beata Cloete, we moved forward, I spun her out and we held our heads up high. Never in my life have I felt more proud to be dancing for our country than at that moment. When we came off the floor, Beata had enjoyed it so much, that she said she wished they would introduce us again.

We then got ready for the Latin, and we felt so confident that we decided to play a little on the floor, changing some of our starts and approaches to the different dances. I must say that that felt extremely good. To our astonishment, and Beata's delight, they actually did introduce the couples again. When it came to our turn, the crowd was really excited, as the cheers went louder and louder. When we came off the floor, Andre had pushed himself so much that he became sick. He felt that he had put in a good effort. He then took off his shoes, loosened his pants and went for a walk. As he was about to return to the competition inside, my aunt came out running and shouted that we had made the final. Andre was at a lost for words. My

aunt was so excited that she notified everyone close to us. The replies and words of encouragement that came through really touched our hearts and Andre could feel the tears building up inside. He then had to push it back as we still had to dance once more. Andre managed to find his way back to me and gave me a huge hug. Everyone was happy for us. Some of the other couples (even the Italians) and the organisers came to congratulate us.

The final commenced with the Latin first. We individually had to do an introductory dance, the Rumba, and this felt so amazing. At this stage, being tired was the least of our problems. We were amongst some of the best dances in their respective countries. While we were dancing Andre felt that all the years of dancing and all the hard work had finally paid off. After our last dance of Ballroom, we felt that that was our best dancing by far.

We were fourth in the Latin, sixth in the Ballroom and sixth in the World Adult Ten dance championships. Never had it felt so could to be placed in those positions. We really felt honoured to be South Africans at that point in time. After the



presentation, we wished our fellow competitors, and they all congratulated us, saying that we really showed some good dancing. We even had spectators coming to us to ask if they could take photographs with us. Some of the top adjudicators, including Sergey Ryupin and Barbara Mc Coll also congratulated us. We were really ecstatic. So much so, that I think we were the last people to leave the venue. We have subsequently received very good feedback from Mr Stuart Saunders, WDC Secretary, which we will use for our training going forward. He also marked us first in all the Latin dancers, which is very positive for us.

Lastly, we would just like to say that we hope we did everyone proud. We would also like to thank God and everyone for their support including SAD&DSC for always coming to our assistance and SAADA for their continued support in dancing. Then we would like to thank our family for always being there and supporting us through everything we did. We would like to say a special thanks to our aunt, Marion Baxter for all her support. Without her none of this would ever have been possible. She was initially the one who introduced us to dancing and supported us emotionally and financially for all these years from baby years. Aunty Marion, from Andre and myself, thank you very much. Most of all, we hope we made you proud.